

Remarks/Arguments:

Claims 15-17, 23, and 27-20 remain in the case. Claims 1-14 and 18-22 are canceled without prejudice as previously withdrawn claims. Claims 24-26 are canceled. Claim 30 is new.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Office identifies that Claim 25 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. New claim 30 presents the subject matter of Claim 25 in combination with base Claim 23. No intervening claims were present. Accordingly, Claim 30 is believed to be allowable, and Claim 25 is canceled to prevent repetition of subject matter.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b)

Claims 15-17, 23, 24 and 27-29 are rejected as anticipated by Lapeyre '281. This reference shows a continuous belt conveyor. The Office specifically refers to structures (49) in the belt plane, shown in Fig. 18. These structures (49) are commonly known in the art as "keys" or "dovetails." The mated keys or dovetails (49) hold sections of the belt in longitudinal planar assembly. However, perpendicular displacement is the inherent mode of assembly or disassembly for keys or dovetails. Therefore, it should be recognized that keys or dovetails (49) offer no notable resistance to disassembly by mutual displacement perpendicular to the belt plane. (See, Lapeyre '281 specification at Col. 3, line 61.)

Lapeyre '281 also shows depending T or L shaped flanges (36 etc) meeting in pairs below the end junctions of the belt sections. A sliding joiner (46), which the Office equates to a clip, mates with the T or L flanges by laterally sliding over them, parallel to the belt plane and offset to be below the keys or dovetails, from the side edge of the belt.

Independent Claims 15 and 23 (as amended) contain at least one feature that distinguishes from Lapeyre '281 and from the remaining references.

In claim 15, this feature is, **"wherein each of the at least two attachment points has a contiguous indexing recess that is a penetrating boltway or depression . . ."** and later in the claim, **"latching the clamping means at the indexing recesses of respective mated attachment points."**

In amended claim 23, this feature is, **"wherein each of the at least two attachment points of respective elements has a contiguous indexing recess that is a penetrating boltway or depression . . ."** and later in the claim, **"at least said one attachment point of said first belt element carries a first alignment guide in proximity to said contiguous indexing recess;"** and finally, **"said clamping means comprises . . . a latchkey, and a second alignment guide arranged with respect to said latchkey . . . to be mateable with said first alignment guide for guiding movement of the latchkey for guiding movement of the latchkey to the contiguous indexing recess . . ."**

The rejection of Claims 15 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) postulates that the “depressions (49),” which are the keys or dovetails of Lapeyre ‘281, are to be equated with applicant’s “indexing recess” of Claims 15 and 23. However, the two types of structure function differently to produce different results. Lapeyre ‘281 employs the keys or dovetails (49) to resist longitudinal separation (Col 3 line 61). Lapeyre’s sliding clip (46) operates on separate portions of the belt, at positions offset below the keys or dovetails (49). Lapeyre’s clip (46) is applied to the T or L flanges (36), which depend below the belt section and are not portions of the keys or dovetails.

Applicant’s clamping means performs a latching function at the attachment points having indexing recesses, as quoted, above. Claim 15, a method claim, includes the method step wherein the clamping means latches at the indexing recesses. Lapeyre’s clip (46) has no engagement with the keys or dovetails (49) that the Office equates with applicant’s indexing recesses. Thus, the keys or dovetails are neither the same or equivalent to applicant’s indexing recesses.

Amended Claim 23, a product claim, contains the structural element of a clamping means including a latchkey. Lapeyre’s slider (46) has no latchkey. Lapeyre does not latch the slider (46) into the dovetails (49).

Accordingly, Lapeyre ‘281 neither anticipates nor makes obvious the subject matter of independent claims 15 and 23. The claims remaining in this application either include the features of claim 15, claim 23, or the new claim 30.

Amendments to the Claims

Amendment to Claim 15 adds a clear reference to a clamping means for purpose of providing an antecedent basis for later reference to this feature. Amendment to Claim 23 incorporates the features of Claim 24. The added features include the latchkey and indexing recess, which distinguish from the cited art.

Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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